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BIGGS'S BAR

AND OTHER
KIDNEYKE BALLADS

HOWARD V. SUTHERLAND

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BIGGS'S BAR

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BIGGS'S BAR

And Other Klondyke Ballads

BY

HOWARD V. SUTHERLAND



DREXEL BIDDLE, PUBLISHER

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SAN FRANCISCO

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1901



GENERAL

Cord _____

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BY ANTHONY J. DREXEL BIDDLE

TO
JOHN M. VER MEHR

IN MEMORY OF
BEANS AND BACON DAYS



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BIGGS'S BAR

'T WAS a sultry afternoon, about the middle of
July,

And the men who loafed in Dawson were feeling
very dry.

Of liquor there had long been none except a barrel
or two,

And that was kept by Major Walsh for himself and a
lucky few.

Now, the men who loaf in Dawson are loafers to the
bone,

And take it easy in a way peculiarly their own ;

They sit upon the sidewalks and smoke and spit and
chew,

And watch the other loafers, and wonder who is
who.

Klondyke Ballads

They only work in winter, when the days are short
and cold,
And then they heat their cabins, and talk and talk of
gold ;
They talk about provisions, and sometimes take a
walk,
But then they hurry back again and talk, and talk,
and talk.

And the men who loaf in Dawson are superior to
style,
For the man who wears a coat *and* vest is apt to cause
a smile ;
While he who sports suspenders or a belt would be a
butt,
And cause ironic comment, and end by being cut.

The afternoon was sultry, as I said some time before ;
'Twas fully ninety in the shade (in the sun a darn
sight more),
And the men who sat on the sidewalks were, one and
all, so dry
That only one perspired, though every one did try.

Klondyke Ballads

Six men were sitting in a line and praying God for air ;
They were Joaquin Miller and "Lumber" Lynch
and "Stogey" Jack Ver Mehr,
"Swift-water" Bill and "Caribou" Bill and a sick
man from the hills,
Who came to town to swap his dust for a box of liver
pills.

I said they prayed for air, and yet perhaps I tell a lie,
For none of them are holy men, and all of them
were dry ;
And so I guess 'tis best for me to say just what I
think—
They prayed the Lord to pity them and send them
all a drink.

Then up spoke Joaquin Miller, as he shook his golden
locks,
And picked the Dawson splinters from his moccasins
and socks
(The others paid attention, for when times are out
of joint
What Joaquin Miller utters is always to the point) :

Klondyke Ballads

“A foot-sore, weary traveller,” the Poet then
began,

“Did tell me many moons ago,—and oh! I loved
the man,—

That Biggs who owns the claim next mine had
started up a bar.

Let’s wander there and quench our thirst.” All
answered, “Right you are.”

Now, Biggs is on Bonanza Creek, claim ninety-six,
below;

There may be millions in it, and there may not;
none will know

Until he gets to bedrock or till bedrock comes to
him—

For Arthur takes it easy and is strictly in the
swim.

It is true, behind his cabin he has sunk a mighty
shaft

(When the husky miners saw it they turned aside
and laughed);

Klondyke Ballads

But Biggs enjoys his bacon, and smokes his pipe and
sings,
Content to be enrolled among the great Bonanza
Kings.

'Tis full three miles from Dawson town to Biggs's
little claim ;
The miners' curses on the trail would make you blush
with shame
The while they slip, or stub their toes against the
roots, or sink
Twelve inches in the mud and slime before their eyes
can wink.

But little cared our gallant six for roots, or slime, or
mud,
For they were out for liquor as a soldier is for
blood ;
They hustled through the forest, nor stopped until
they saw
Biggs, wrapt in contemplation, beside his cabin
door.

Klondyke Ballads

He rose to greet his visitors, and ask them for the
news,
And said he was so lonesome that he always had the
blues ;
He hadn't seen a paper for eighteen months, he
said,
And that had been in Japanese—a language worse
than dead.

They satisfied his thirst for news, then thought they
of their own,
And Miller looked him in the eye and gave a little
groan,
And all six men across their mouths did pass a sun-
burnt hand
In a manner most deliberate, which all can under-
stand.

“ We heard you kept a bar, good Biggs,” the gentle
Poet said,
“ And so we thought we'd hold you up, and we are
almost dead !”

Klondyke Ballads

He said no more. Biggs understood, and thusly
spoke to them

In accents somewhat British and prefixed with a
“Hem !”

“The bar you’ll find a few yards hence as up that
trail you go ;

I never keep my liquor in the blooming ’ouse, you
know.

Just mush along and take a drink, and when you are
content

Come back and tell me, if you can, who now is
President.”

They mushed along, those weary men, nor looked to
left or right,

But thought of how each cooling drink would trickle
out of sight ;

And very soon they found the goal they came for
from afar—

A keg, half full of water, in a good old gravel bar !

Klondyke Ballads

THE CHE-CHÀ-KO*

A POOR *che-chà-ko* once arrived
At Dawson by the Yukon side.
His eyes were big, his boat was small,
Of outfit he had none at all—

Had bought one in the Golden West,
But lost it on the Chilcoot's crest ;
And lived so long on beans and pork
That he had hardly strength to walk.

He made his vessel good and fast
And trod the muddy banks at last ;
Then wandered through the dirty town
And sought a place to settle down.

* *Che-chà-ko*—*i. e.*, new-comer—an Indian word. In the Klondyke a man was considered a *che-chà-ko* until he had seen the ice leave the Yukon.

Klondyke Ballads

He wandered here, he wandered there,
And heard the husky miners swear,
And curse their luck and curse the ground
Wherein no gold dust they had found.

“I settles this yere matter now,”
Said he, and wiped his manly brow.
“I aint the man to hang about
A played-out camp. I just gets out.”

And then he borrowed pick and spade,
And very soon a hole had made
Behind McCarthy's dancing hall,
But found no nuggets, large or small.

“Gol darn the luck,” he sadly said,
And scratched the foliage on his head ;
“I guess I'll make a di-rect line
Back home and let these suckers mine.”

And so he pawned his extra jeans,
And filled his boat with pork and beans ;
And ere the sun was sinking, he
Was drifting onward to the sea.

Klondyke Ballads

OUR STOVE

WHEN we bought our stove in Dawson
We were jubilant, and thought
That we owned the finest baker
Two men had ever bought.
Said my partner, "She's a beauty."
"She's a hummer, Jack," said I,
"And she'll burn all sorts of lumber,
Whether wet wood, damp, or dry."

Thirty dollars, sir, she cost us
('Tis enough to make one weep !)
Yet we pitied the poor devil
Who would sell a stove so cheap.
And we packed it to our cabin
On a scorching summer's day ;
Sixty pounds it weighed, plus stove-pipe—
Yet we sniggered all the way.

Klondyke Ballads

So that evening we lit her,
And we watched our beauty burn
Till the heat within the cabin
Gave my partner there a turn—
Made him deathly sick at stomach—
And I scorched my only shirt
While I watched our beans and bacon
Lest our victuals should be hurt.

You bet she was a hummer !
But she hummed too much for us
On those blazing days of summer,
And we'd stand outside and cuss.
And we'd take our grub and eat it
On our porch, where likewise came
Gay mosquitoes singing anthems ;
But the stove, sir, made us game.

“ When the winter comes, old chappie,
Our stove,” said Jack, “ we'll bless.
Think of fifty below zero ! ”
And I sadly murmured : “ M'yes.”

Klondyke Ballads

So we cooked our meals, and sweated
While we ate them, for we knew
In a month or so the weather
Would be cold enough for two.

When the winter came our hummer
Looked a bit the worse for wear ;
Her top was sagging inward
Which we couldn't well repair.
The damper, too, was cranky,
And the oven seemed to hold
Some secret understanding
With our enemy, the cold.

We could fill that stove with dry wood,
We could cram it up with green,
But the shavings wouldn't catch, sir ;
Such a stove we'd never seen.
And our bacon wouldn't sizzle,
And our coffee almost froze ;
And we shivered up our backbones
And we shivered in our toes.

Klondyke Ballads

Our cabin was an ice chest,
And we nearly froze to death
While we blew upon the fire
With a semi-frozen breath,
And we crawled within our blankets,
Sick at heart and fain to curse.
Talk of suffering ! No torture
Man devised was ever worse.

Now 'tis springtime, and we've purchased
Another and we trust
It will act a little better,
For, to tell the truth, we're bust.
And if this won't cook our victuals—
Beans and bacon, little more—
We shall auction off our matches
And eat our *menu* raw.

Klondyke Ballads

THE SORROWS OF HAIRY DICK

WHEN Hairy Dick had staked his claim
 (Some fifty miles from Dawson)
He limped to town—for he was lame—
 To get the same recorded.
It took him just one year to hit
A spot with any gold in it,
 But now he had it, sure.

So Hairy Dick did stand in line
 Outside the Recorder's Office
And thought of flowers, fruits, and wine,
 And other earthly follies.
'Twas forty-two degrees below
The while he stood upon the snow,
 And the merry wind blew strong.

Klondyke Ballads

The fiftieth man was Hairy Dick
Outside the Senkler portal ;
And some of them were feeling sick
At heart, and some at stomach.
But still they stood as grim as Death,
And just as pale, and fought for breath
That froze upon their beards.

Now, Hairy Dick had lily feet
Encased in sacks of gunny ;
The snow, of course, gave forth no heat
And they were nearly frozen.
His ruby lips were turning blue ;
His nose and ears were smarting, too ;
And then he moved up one !

Then Hairy Dick began to jump
In elephantine antics,
And said he'd give his summer's dump
To get his claim recorded.
But there were no officials near
Or he had lost the same, I fear.
Then where would he have been ?

Klondyke Ballads

So Hairy Dick just did his best
To foster circulation ;
He never gave his feet a rest
For seven weary hours.
By slow degrees he reached the door
Where hope is lost for evermore—
And then they closed the office !

I cannot write what Hairy said
About the poor officials ;
His face, erst white, grew very red,
His very blood was boiling.
His language was not choice, but strong ;
And all that night he sang his song
As he had danced all day.

Next morning he awoke at three
And ate some beans and bacon,
Then hurried back ; the fifteenth he
To wait for Mr. Senkler.
'Twas half-past twelve before he passed
Benumbed with cold the door at last,
And fainted near the stove.



Klondyke Ballads

“ ‘E’s got a fit ; let’s chuck ‘im out,”

Thus cried the men around him ;

But Hairy gave a mighty shout

And consciousness recovered.

“ I’m in, and I am in to stay,”

He shrieked, and wiped the sweat away

From off his grimy forehead.

By three o’clock had come his turn

To plead before the window

Where husky miners sometimes learn

That there are always others.

And Hairy Dick was told his claim

Had long ago been staked ; the same

Had also been recorded.

He spake no word, but straightway fell

And from the room was carried ;

And even now the miners tell

Of Hairy Dick’s departure.

And one and all maintain him smart

To own a somewhat damaged heart

And work it out so quick.

Klondyke Ballads

OMAR IN THE KLONDYKE

“**T**HIS Omar seems a decent chap,” said Flap-jack Dick one night,

When he had read my copy through and then blown
out the light.

“I ain’t much stuck on poetry, because I runs to
news,

But I appreciates a man that loves his glass of booze.

“And Omar here likes good red wine, although he’s
pretty mum

On liquors, which is better yet, like whiskey, gin, or
rum ;

Perhaps his missus won’t allow him things like that
to touch,

And he doesn’t like to own it. Well, I don’t blame
Omar much.

Klondyke Ballads

“Then I likes a man what’s partial to the ladies,
young or old,

And Omar seems to seek ’em much as me and you
seek gold ;

I only hope for his sake that his wife don’t learn his
game

Or she’ll put a chain on Omar, and that would be a
shame.

“His language is some florid, but I guess it is the
style

Of them writer chaps that studies and burns the mid-
night ile ;

He tells us he’s no chicken ; so I guess he knows
what’s best,

And can hold his own with Shakespeare, Waukeen
Miller, and the rest.

“But I hope he ain’t a thinkin’ of a trip to this
yere camp,

For our dancin’ girls is ancient, and our liquor’s
somewhat damp

Klondyke Ballads

By doctorin' with water, and we ain't got wine at
all,
Though I had a drop of porter—but that was back
last fall.

“ And he mightn't like our manners, and he mightn't
like the smell
Which is half the charm of Dawson ; and he mightn't
live to tell
Of the acres of wild roses that grows on every
street ;
And he mightn't like the winter, or he mightn't like
the heat.

“ So I guess it's best for Omar for to stay right where
he is,
And gallivant with Tottie, or with Flossie, or with
Liz ;
And fill himself with claret, and, although it ain't
like beer,
I wish he'd send a bottle—just one bottle—to us
here.”

Klondyke Ballads

A KLONDYKE LOVE SONG

WILL you love me as you loved me when the
snow was on the ground

And Dawson was as chilly as a tomb?

Will you love me as you loved me when we heard
the dismal sound

Of a hungry Siwash howling in the gloom?

Will you love me as you loved me when the birds
had flown away

From the forests of the Klondyke, vast and still?

Will you love me as you loved me when we watched
the North-lights play

In the heavens when the nights were long and chill?

Will you love me as you loved me when each hour
was a trial

And the soul grew sick of sorrow, sick of pain?

Will you love me as you loved me when we hungered
for a smile

From a sun we never hoped to see again?

Klondyke Ballads

Will you love me as you loved me when it seemed
we lived apart

From the others, though imprisoned, and were true?
Will you love me as you loved me when you told me
that your heart
Was yearning for a love it never knew?

Will you love me as you loved me when we sat beside
the stove,

And the wind was almost bursting in the door
Of the cabin where I met you and I told you of my
love,

And you promised to be mine for evermore?
Will you love me as you loved me when your eyes
were wet with tears

And I bade you, love, be patient with your lot?
Will you love me as you loved me when we meet in
later years

And the trials of the Klondyke are forgot?

Klondyke Ballads

THE DAWSON CITY BAND

A PROMISED joy forever was the Dawson City
Band,

The band we all remember in the spring of '98;
Its leader was a Hebrew, long of hair and deft of
hand,

Good at cooking as at music, though he found it
out too late.

He had learned to play the fife,
And had risen so in life

That he came to be the leader of the city band in
Dawson.

In the band there was a fiddler, very tall and very thin,
Dressed in mackinaws and top-boots, down at heel
and out at toe.

In appearance he was sober, and one felt he could
not sin

Except when making music on his instrument of
woe.

Klondyke Ballads

He was nurturing a cough,
And, though his friends would scoff,
He would tell them very sadly that he'd leave his
bones in Dawson.

His brother blew the cornet. He was broad and
deep of lung—

Sported overalls and gumboots and a jack-knife at
his side.

Had he ever played in 'Frisco he would surely have
been hung,

For his ears weren't built for music; and though
he always tried

To play his level best,

He could handicap the rest,

And win by several seconds over all the band in Dawson.

Then a sickly individual crossed the Chilcoot with a
flute

And a pair of German stockings and a pound or
so of beans;

And when the bag was empty then he hired out to toot

In the hopes of charming nuggets to the pockets
of his jeans.

Klondyke Ballads .

An unfortunate mishap
Had robbed him of his cap,
And he had to march bareheaded when the band
paraded Dawson.

The trombone man was husky, and his cheeks were
fat and red,
And his stomach was tremendous, but he lost it in
the fall ;
And the way he played that trombone was enough to
rouse the dead,
But he liked to earn his wages—so he didn't mind
at all.

His legs were very short,
And his clothing had been bought
Of the man who was the leader of the city band in
Dawson.

The last of the musicians was the man who beat the
drum,
A surly individual with the temper of a goat ;
He once had been a blacksmith, and now he made
things hum,

Klondyke Ballads

Although (he said so proudly) he could never play
by note.

Although he knew no fear,
He was always in the rear
Of the gallant band that marched along the dirty
streets of Dawson.

The leader had an organ, of the kind we love not
much,

And sometimes ground a solo and sometimes a
tercet

With the flutist and the drummer; he sometimes
sang in Dutch,

Being audible distinctly in spite of a sestet.

Then he passed around the plate,

And the miners thought it great,

And showered little nuggets on the first real band in
Dawson.

Every morn the band was gathered near the Pioneer
Saloon

And played for two good hours, while the mining
magnates sat

Klondyke Ballads

On the edges of the sidewalk and encored every
“toon,”

And once raised fifty dollars for the man who had
no hat.

Then the band went home to eat

And to rest its tired feet,

For it's work to stand for hours on the dusty streets
of Dawson.

After dark the band was cornered in the Oatley
Sisters' Hall,

Where the fortune-favored miner likes to lower
down his drink ;

Where the torn and lorn *che-chà-ko* is invited to the
ball

By the pleasure-loving lady who is never known
to think.

There it played till one or two,

And the miners were so few

That they paid no more attention to the sleepy band
of Dawson.

Klondyke Ballads

The band took part at weddings ; it made music at
a birth

When the baby took to sleeping and gave it half a
chance.

It was big on each occasion when beneath the frozen
earth

The miners left their partners arrayed in flannel
pants ;

And men would wink and say,

Making music seemed to pay,

And they tried to get positions in the little band of
Dawson.

But the fiddler caught a fever and expired in dire pain,
Helped to heaven by a doctor from a small New
England town,

Who gave him something nasty and said he'd call again,
Although he had no need to when his medicine
was down ;

For his drugs had all got mixed,

And the fiddler had been fixed,

And they couldn't find another one in all the town
of Dawson.

Klondyke Ballads

Then the trombone man got tipsy and was set to
sawing wood,

And the drummer and the leader had a fight and
would not speak ;

And the man who played the cornet thought the time
was ripe and good

To skip with all the profits—so he homeward made
a sneak ;

And the flutist took a lay

On a bench claim far away,

And 'twas winter 'ere we saw him begging grub again
in Dawson.

So the band became disbanded, and now of all the six

But one is making money—Ikey Sutro in his store ;

Where he doles out dust to people on their watches
or their picks,

And as he ground the organ grinds the miners,
only more.

But the band itself is gone,

And the loafers, all forlorn,

Whisper sadly of the hours when it cheered them up
in Dawson.

Klondyke Ballads

THE KLONDYKE MOSQUITO

THERE ain't no insect fleeter than the musical
mosquiter

That summers in the Klondyke when the snow is
off the ground ;

It can fly a mile a minute, and a fallin' brick ain't
in it

When it strikes your little bald spot with a sort of
rushin' sound,

With a roarin', snortin', whizzin', a most onearthly
sound.

With an instinct that is hellish it will light upon and
relish

A pay-streak, sir, wherever your anatomy is bare ;
And if you try to harm it, you only can alarm it,

For when you think to smash it the insect isn't
there ;

And you swear for many minutes, but the insect
isn't there.

Klondyke Ballads

You can measure it by inches, and the boldest fellow
winces

When he hears it hummin' Wagner in a key that's
pitched too high ;

And you wish your skin was harder, for you hate to
be a larder,

And you know that when it's hungry it will come
to you for pie—

For the blood of us poor miners to mosquitos is
but pie.

You will never find it yawnin' though it drills from
night to mornin',

And seeks to aid digestion by singin' through its
nose ;

And its drill is even sharper than the wits of Captain
Harper

Or the wind that every winter through your lonely
cabin blows—

How the miners curse the winter when the wind
of heaven blows !

Klondyke Ballads

The mosquiter bites you sleepin' ; it will bite you
when you're creepin',
With a pack upon your shoulders, on a long and
sloppy trail ;
It will bite you when you're workin' ; it will bite
you when you're shirkin' ;
It will bite you if you're husky ; it will bite you
if you're frail.
All's one to the mosquiter, who is never, never
frail.

It is pitiless, pernicious, energetically vicious,
But the angels seem to love it, for I've never killed
one yet ;
And although I ain't no hero I long again for zero,
For the blamed mosquiter gets it in the neck them
days, you bet !
In the neck the critter gets it, and serves him
right, you bet !

Klondyke Ballads

A MINER'S CHIEF THOUGHT

OF what does a miner think
When his day's hard work is done?
Does he dream of his girl at home?
Does he think of the vagrant sun?

Does he think of his mortgaged farm,
Or the debts that he left unpaid
In the land he forsook for one
Where seldom a cent is made?

Not much. As he smokes his pipe
He gives his head a rub,
And schemes how to raise the wind
Enough for his next month's grub.

Klondyke Ballads

PIMPLY PETE

PIMPLY PETE was a sickly cuss,
He never was well, and he sometimes was wuss ;
And one day he sighed and he said to us,
“ I’m goin’ to die,” says he.

We tried to jolly poor Pimply some,
But he wouldn’t be jollied ; and we was dumb
When he said, “ I’m goin’ to kingdom come
For to get a fair lay,” says he.

“ This life is a farce,” poor Pimply said,
“ And our claims are oncertain until we’re dead ;
And only then do we find a bed
That suits our bones,” says he.

“ I’m sick of sufferin’ day and night
From cold that freezes and winds that bite ;
For nearly a year I ain’t felt right,
And now I’ll quit,” says he.

Klondyke Ballads

“When I was younger I heard it told
That the streets of heaven is paved with gold,
And I’m going up there, before I’m old,
To strike for a lay,” says he.

“This Klondyke here is a low down bluff,
And the way we’s treated is pretty rough ;
But heaven, I guess, is sure enough,
And I’ll give it a try,” says he.

“I’ve led a pretty oncertain life—
But then I had an oncertain wife ;
And that’s as bad as a butcher-knife
Between the ribs,” says he.

“But now she’s dead, and I guess she’s found
Some handsome angel to take her round
And show her the sights ; so I’ll sleep sound—
Thank God for that,” says he.

Klondyke Ballads

Then Pimply kept infernally still
And we saw as how he was pretty ill,
But we says, "You'll live if you has the will."
 "I ain't the will," says he.

And then he shivered from heel to nose
And looked at us till we almost froze ;
And then he turned up his eyes and toes
 And never a word said he.

A doctor came and examined his juice,
And said that flapjacks had settled his goose.
We planted him there, behind that spruce,
 And wrote on a stake, wrote we :

"Here lies the ruins of Pimply Pete,
Who suffered from flapjacks and chilly feet ;
We hopes he's gone where he gets some heat,
 For he was a brick, was he."

Klondyke Ballads

THE LAST SACK OF FLOUR

'TIS the last sack of flour
Left standing alone ;
Its expensive companions
Are eaten and gone.
Their shrouds in the corner
Awaken vain sighs,
As I ponder o'er biscuits,
O'er doughnuts and pies.

'Tis the last sack of flour—
A small one at that ;
And I fear I shall die like
A famishing rat.
For 'twill cost fifty dollars
In black sand and dust
To purchase a new one—
And oh, I am bust !

HOW WILLIE LEARNED TO SWEAR

WHEN Willie left the homestead where his
parents did abide,
And braved the dreaded Chilcoot and the terrors of
“inside,”
A slender lad he was, sir, a youth most primitive,
With neither bones nor character and just too good
to live.

His parents hugged him fondly when the engine
gave a shriek,
Thus suggesting very kindly that they'd better make
a sneak ;
And Willie's voice grew husky when he bade them
au revoir
And departed for Seattle in a tourist sleeping car.

Klondyke Ballads

At the stations many maidens came to see the eager
crew

Who were leaving for the Klondyke in apparel
strange and new ;

And one and all saw Willie, blue-eyed Will, with
cheeks aflame,

And one and all sighed fondly and murmured,
“ What a shame ! ”

A minister who saw him placed a hand upon his
head,

Saying mildly as he did so, “ When you lie upon
your bed

In the Klondyke, may the angels keep you safe and
free from harm,

And be sure, in buying blankets, that the same are
good and warm. ”

Little Willie reached Seattle and commenced to spend
his cash

On bacon, beans and flour, and evaporated trash ;

Klondyke Ballads

On woollen goods and overalls, on hardware, drugs,
and furs,
Mosquito netting, rubber boots, and five enormous
curs.

These canines caused him trouble till he chained
them 'neath the hatch,
And left them there to meditate, and, very soon, to
scratch ;
And then he bribed a steward to feed them twice a
day,
Then hied him to his stuffy berth and moaned the
time away.

He had a fellow-sufferer, and very soon there sprang
The comradeship between them of men who are to
hang ;
And when they got to Skaguay they were partners,
and each swore
None ever knew true partnership, such partnership,
before.

Klondyke Ballads

Of the trip across the summit, of the hardships of
the trail,

I say nothing, but that Willie very often would turn
pale

When he heard his partner swearing like a demon in
the sleet—

Heard him curse the trembling canines—saw him
argue with his feet.

Little Willie kept his temper, but that was all he
kept ;

For his partner stole his outfit on Lake Bennett as
he slept,

And Willie had to purchase, at a most unheard of
price,

Beans and bacon to subsist on till he reached his
Paradise.

Still the dogs had not been stolen, but they missed
a master's hand,

And would soldier in the traces in a way dogs
understand ;

Klondyke Ballads

They would rend their leather harness or would ride
upon the sled,
And Willie, ever patient, often wished them frozen
dead.

At last his heart grew bitter as he pondered night
and day
How his trusted partner fooled him, and at last it
made him say
When the dogs were extra lazy, "It's ashamed of
you I am,
You naughty little doggies." Then he blushed and
muttered, "Damn!"

But that "damn" meant Willie's downfall; for the
dogs would cock an ear
When they heard the word familiar, which filled
their souls with fear;
For from "damn" it grew to ———, and from
———— even worse,
And before young Willie knew it, he had mastered
how to curse.

Klondyke Ballads

THE YUKON PIONEER

A MIGHTY man (if the truth be known) is the
Yukon Pioneer—

The man who trudged o'er the ice and snow in
ninety-six or seven ;

But terribly small (let the truth be said) are the
chances he takes to clear

The fence that partitions the sheep from the goats
in the outer fields of heaven.

If I were a Pioneer I'd pray

For the good of my soul by night and day—

I would !

'Tis not that the Yukon Pioneer is wicked or prone
to crime ;

He is better by far than is many a man with a
chance to go the gait ;

But the lies that slip from his frozen lips are worse
than the lies that Time

Klondyke Ballads

Has listened to all these centuries, while grinding
his teeth with hate.

Why, the sun in disgust forsakes the sky
When the Pioneers start in to lie—

It does !

The story is told of a Pioneer who never could tell
a lie ;

But 'tis said, in extenuation, by those who knew
him best

That had he a tongue to talk with (he had cancer,
by-the-by)

He had certainly been awarded a medal by all the
rest.

For 'tis held 'mong all good Pioneers
That truth is a subject fit for tears—

Just think !

They sit in the gloom of the wintry months and lie
about God and man ;

They lie about grub, and they lie about dogs ;
they lie about heat and cold ;

Klondyke Ballads

They lie about mortgaged homes and farms ; they
lie as they only can ;

They lie about strikes and fool stampedes and
claims that contain no gold.

They sooner would lay them down in death
Than pollute the air with a truthful breath—
That's what.

Oh, great and grand were the Pioneers who con-
quered the Golden West,

And we wish we had lived in the good old days
when they were in their youth ;

But greater by far are the Pioneers who braved the
Chilcoot's crest,

And cursed their dogs, and their partners, too,
and never can tell the truth—

Who give no thought for the good of their
souls,

Though the Devil makes merry and orders
more coals.

Ha, ha !

THAT FIRST FLAPJACK

WHEN I made my maiden flapjack I was still a
tender youth,
Inexperienced and reckless, caring little what we
ate
If it only stilled our hunger, which, to tell the very
truth,
Like the poor was ever with us, and would never,
never wait.

When we landed first in Dawson we purchased our
bread,
But the habit was expensive—so I thought I'd
save our dust
By making tasty flapjacks, for as Bill, my partner,
said,
“If you mix 'em good and plenty we can eat 'em
till we bust.”



Klondyke Ballads

When I asked him for directions I found that all he
knew

Was contained in that one sentence, and that I
must depend

Upon my ingenuity to pull me safely through,
And so construct a flapjack that would keep him
still my friend.

So I took five cups of water and a cup of "Price's
Best,"

And stirred the mess with water till my strength
was wellnigh spent ;

Then I salted it profusely, and put it to the test
In the largest of our fry-pans, and it looked just
like cement.

The stove was hot as Hades, and while the minutes
passed

My heart was beating wildly, for I feared the thing
might burn ;

And when I tried to shift it I found it anchored fast,
For, having put no grease in, the flapjack wouldn't
turn.

Klondyke Ballads

But I dug around it gently, though I injured it a lot,
And then prepared to flap it as I'd seen some
miners do ;
Then I grabbed the pan adroitly, but the handle
was so hot
That I dropped it on the instant and my smoking
flapjack, too.

With a spoon we scooped the remnants from the table
and the floor,
And placed them in the fry-pan with a little bit
of lard,
And they mixed in perfect friendship, and I let them
bake some more
While I waited several minutes, cloth in hand, and
breathing hard.

Then I grabbed again the fry-pan, and I tossed that
flapjack high—
“Too high,” as Bill said, sadly, though the roof
withstood the shock,

Klondyke Ballads

And the falling flapjack hit him fair and squarely in
the eye,

While I looked at him astonished, for he stood it
like a rock.

Well, I scraped it off his shoulder, and I placed it
in the pan

And let it bake some minutes till the underside
was brown ;

Then the beans and tea were ready—so the two of
us began

To compare our maiden flapjack with the bread
they sold in town.

“It’s pretty hard,” Bill muttered, “and I guess
we’ll need the axe

To break it into pieces, but that’s healthy, I’ve
heard tell ;

And the stuff we got in Dawson was more like dough
or wax,

And this will keep our teeth sharp, and be some
fun as well.”

Klondyke Ballads

Bill always was good-hearted, and he acted very kind
About my first day's cooking, and said some pretty
things

About my handling flour which I cannot call to mind,
Except that beans and flapjacks was fodder fit for
kings.

Then Bill he took the hammer and he broke in little
squares

The flapjack, and we soaked it many minutes in
our tea ;

And we ate it, every morsel, for we always ate like bears,
And Bill said he enjoyed it and it could not better
be.

That was many years ago, sir, and since that time
and now

I've made a million flapjacks, and the hair from
off my head

Has fallen in the fry-pan with the moisture from my
brow,

And my patient Klondyke partner is silent—being
dead.

Klondyke Ballads

But though I go on living till Bill has grown his
wings,

The day I made that flapjack I shall never, sir,
forget ;

I'll remember how he praised it, and called it food
for kings,

Then broke it with his hammer, and ate it up,
you bet !

Klondyke Ballads

SOUR GRAPES

AH, tell us not of lamb and greens,
Potatoes, pies, and porter ;
We'd rather dine off pork and beans
Washed down with nice snow water.

And tell us not of feather beds
Wherein a man might stifle ;
On good, hard bunks we lay our heads
And deem white sheets a trifle.

And tell us not of pretty girls
And charming conversations ;
We'd sooner talk with Swedes and churls
About our dogs and rations.

Klondyke Ballads

And tell us not about the sun,
Nor prate of bees and flowers ;
This semi-gloominess is fun—
We work in it for hours.

We never want to hear the news,
For we are always aching
For some old fossil's foolish views
On bedrock, or on baking.

We like to starve, we love to freeze,
We yearn to catch the fever ;
But when we quit this lovely place
We quit, you bet, to leave her !

Klondyke Ballads

APPRECIATION IN DAWSON

THE show had been a good one and the miners
were in tears
And wiped their weeping foreheads on their yellow
mackinaws ;
They whistled and they shouted ; they indulged in
mighty cheers,
And almost broke the floor in as they stamped
their wild applause.

Then they stood in knots together while the leading
lady came
To the front, and curtsied slowly till she almost
touched the ground ;
And the miners got excited, and they called her by
her name
Till the lady danced on tip-toe and you couldn't
hear a sound.

Klondyke Ballads

And while she pirouetted up and down and to and
fro,

And the orchestra of seven scraped and thumped
and tootle-toohed,

The miners talked together and considered how to
show

Their unqualified approval of a Juliet in the nude.

They talked for many minutes ; then they pushed
toward the front

(Having silenced first the music) a miner known
as Russ—

Roarin' Russ, of Circle City—who gave a sort of
grunt

As he cleared his throat for action, and addressed
the lady thus :

“ My gal, there's no denyin' that you saveys how
to act,

And your Jooliet was perfect as to actin' and to
shape ;

Klondyke Ballads

And as long as you is hired you can chalk it down
a fact

That the Pioneer Theayter will never wear no
crape.

“We ain’t so mighty friendly to your little Rome-o,
For he makes too bloomin’ easy with a lady, so
we think ;

But you was just a hummer, and durin’ all the show
We never took to yawnin’ or to orderin’ of
drink.

“We’re sorry that the parson made a bungle of his
work,

And the liquor was too heavy for a lady of your
class ;

And we’re sorry for your cousin who was killed by
Romy’s dirk—

Yet you couldn’t but expect it, for that Romy is
an ass.

Klondyke Ballads

“ Now, what we’ve been a talkin’ of is how to show
you best
That we like your style and figure, and we decided,
fust,
That as a gal is human, and must eat and be well
dressed,
We couldn’t do no better than to offer you some
dust.

“ Then we knew as how in ’Frisco lady actors whom
one knows
Gets violets or something with a smell that’s good
and strong,
But in Dawson there’s no flowers, and the bottled
scents is froze—
So we thought of something better and we hope
we ain’t done wrong.

“ You know, I guess, by this time that vegetables be
A quite onheard of luxury in this yere mining
hell ;

Klondyke Ballads

Nor love nor money buys 'em, nor pull, and so, you
see,

'They're worth much more than roses and healthier
as well.

"We cannot get you flowers; but my partner,
Lousetown Joe,

Has a crate of fresh potatoes, and we offers you a
third;

And here's the sack of gold dust, and we're mighty
glad to know

That you'll never get the scurvy—for, Jooliet,
you're a bird."

Then the lady dropped a curtsy and grabbed the
little sack,

And said that Mr. Tybalt (better known as Pot-
luck Pete)

Would fetch the spuds to-morrow; then she pirou-
etted back

And the miners yelled together until they struck
the street.

Klondyke Ballads

IN WINTER

BEANS and bacon thrice a day,
Such is our diet ;
We could live off better fare
Had we dust to buy it ;
But our sacks are void of gold,
No one gives us credit ;
We are in a pretty fix,
But we grin and bear it.

Fruit is coming to an end,
Ditto our flour ;
Once a week we hit our mush—
Mush, the source of power.
Neither milk nor sugar now
Graces our table ;
Once we had a stock of meats—
Now we read a label.

Klondyke Ballads

Sunday is our day for spuds,
Coffee comes on Friday ;
Thursdays we partake of rice,
Tuesday *was* our pie day.
He who mentions butter now
Has to wash the dishes ;
Still we hope to realize
Some day our wishes.

Klondyke Ballads

COOKING IN THE KLONDYKE

“THERE’S something burning on the stove,”
The first *che-chà-ko* said ;
“It doesn’t smell like bacon,
So I guess it is the bread.”

“The bread be d——,” the cook replied
(A mighty cook was he),
“I haven’t baked the stuff as yet ;
“Perhaps it is the tea !”

“The tea can’t burn, you stupid ass,”
His partner made reply.
“I’ll bet you’ve spoilt beyond repair
My baking powder pie.”

“The pie you brag about,” said cook,
“Was baked this early morn.
I tried a piece of it and wished
I never had been born.”

Klondyke Ballads

The first *che-chà-ko* puffed his pipe
And thought him what to say.
“God knows,” said he, “that your pies are
Far heavier than clay.”

“You eat them all the same,” said cook,
“And half my share as well.
But something’s burning—that is sure ;
I know it by the smell.”

“I say it is the bacon, sir !”
“And I say it is not !”
The cook then ope’d the oven door,
And swore, for it was hot.

“Ye gods !” he yelled, “’tis one on you,
Your gum boots I espy !”
The first *che-chà-ko* held his peace—
He’d put them there to dry !

Klondyke Ballads

BILL McGEE

“ARE you takin’ any men on, boss?” asked
Billy J. McGee

Of the man who ran Red Murphy’s claim, Dominion 33.

The foreman sized the speaker up, then unto him
says he :

“You look a husky, skookum man, so you can work
for me,

And you’ll find that I am pretty square if me and
you agree.”

Now, Bill was only five foot high but broader than a
bear ;

His legs looked thick, his back looked broad, his
shoulders good and square ;

He had a D Profundis voice, accounted somewhat
rare ;

Klondyke Ballads

His hands were hid, his arms looked long, as likewise
did his hair,
But in his forehead there were lines that spoke of
constant care.

So Bill McGee first got his job and then he said :
“ I say,
You’ve took me on to work for you, but how about
my pay ?
I ain’t the sort to work blamed hard, and then be
told some day
There ain’t no money in the dump and I can walk
away.
That’s what three fellows had to do on 27 A.”

The foreman rolled his plug around, then looked
Bill in the eye.
“ You’re all right, Bill,” he says to him, “ I likes a
man what’s spry.

Klondyke Ballads

This 33's a dead sure thing, gumboot me if I lie ;
There's fifty thousand in that dump—just take a pan
and try."

Bill took a pan and found a chunk. He dropped it
with a sigh.

When Bill McGee began to work they set him haul-
ing wood,
But every man upon the claim hauled more than
Billy could ;
He slipped and stumbled on the snow, and when at
last he stood
He almost froze himself to death, and, though that
isn't good,
The foreman swore at Bill McGee and only hoped
he would.

So Bill was set to sawing logs, and he sawed a log or
two,
But the third one always stumped him, for he
couldn't saw it through ;

Klondyke Ballads

The cold attacked his fingers and his lips looked
pretty blue,
And the foreman got excited and told him who was
who,
And asked him what he lived for, and, pray, what
could he do ?

Then Bill next tried the windlass, but he didn't try
it long ;
For though his arms looked powerful and though his
back looked strong
He couldn't hoist the bucket, and the foreman sang
a song
(Though the words weren't very proper) and asked
him what was wrong,
And drove him from the windlass and wished him in
Hong-Kong.

But the foreman was a Christian, although he had to
kick ;
So he sent Bill down the ladder with instructions
how to pick ;

Klondyke Ballads

But a rung gave way beneath him and he landed like
a brick,

And they put him in the bucket and hauled him up
darned quick,

But Billy's neck was broken and he was looking sick.

They laid him in an outhouse where the dead man
quickly froze ;

And the friendly foreman muttered as he sadly blew
his nose :

“ This life is d—— uncertain and pretty full of woes,
And the men who die the quickest is generally those
Built powerful, like Bill here, whose days is at a
close.”

“ I liked him good and plenty,” one burly miner
said,

As he drummed his fingers lightly on the dead man's
icy head.

“ He never ate no butter on his flapjacks or his bread,
And never used no sugar—I took his share instead.

But, boys, he never once ondressed before he went
to bed !”

Klondyke Ballads

The miners thought it funny and shook their heads
thereat,

Till he who praised the dead man removed his mitts
and hat.

“We’ll take ’em off him this time,” he said, and
then he spat.

“We haven’t got the linen for to wind around a cat,
But we’ll sew him up in sacking and let it go at that.”

And so they took Bill’s clothes off, and none of them
could speak

At first from sheer amazement at what they called
his “cheek.”

The foreman broke the silence: “That Bill, there,
was a freak,

And if he still was living I’d label him a sneak.

I always had to wonder why the fellow was so weak.”

From off the corpse before them they took two
mackinaws,

Three shirts and heavy undervests and four thick
pair of drawers;

Klondyke Ballads

Three pair of canvas overalls and socks it seems by
scores ;
And when they got to bedrock they almost broke in
roars
Of laughter at the foreman, who thought they had
good cause.

For Bill was over sixty and was made of bone and
skin,
And the miners when they eyed him had to turn
aside and grin.
His arms were like two matches ; each leg was like a
pin—
You could almost look right through him he was so
very thin,
And for such a man to labor it really seemed a sin.

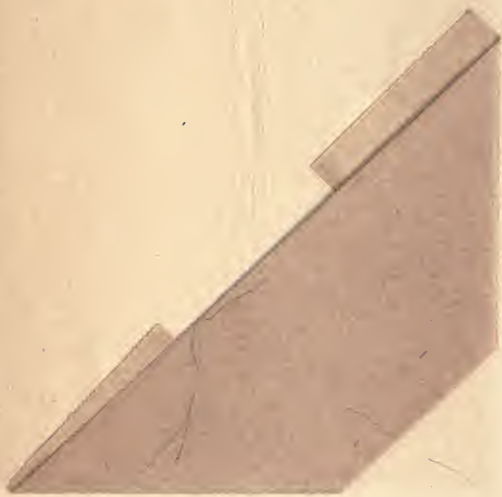
But they covered him with sacking sewed as neat as
neat could be,
And they fixed him up for shipment to his friends
across the sea.

Klondyke Ballads

And the foreman muttered softly : “ If there’s a fool
it’s me,
For I was made a fool of by that there Bill McGee ;
But now he’s dead forever—so I’ve the laugh on
he.”







D. P. Elder and
Morgan Shepard



San Francisco

